brightness of the evaluation mark, and a step of measuring the displacement of the optical axis on the basis of the relationship between the brightness of the image of the evaluation mark and the direction of the diffraction grating patterns of the evaluation mark.

IN THE SPECIFICATION:

Please amend the specification as follows:

On page 19, please replace the paragraph beginning at line 3 with the following:

Fig. 11 is a schematic illustration of the distribution of light at the position of the aperture of the objectives obtained when the microscope of Fig. 10A and 10B is used. The spot of normal light 16 and those of primary diffracted light 17 have a profile similar to that of the aperture 3 of the lighting lens 2. The ratio of the circle representing the numerical aperture 18 of the projected lens to the radius of the spot of normal light 16 is referred to lighting coherence. It is possible for a microscope with a lighting coherence of about 0.5 to reliably secure a sufficient gap separating the spot of normal light 16 and those of primary diffracted light 17 by selecting an appropriate value for the cycle length of diffraction gratings. Then, the shield section is only required so as to be snugly placed in the gap. Thus, the shield section does not require any rigorous alignment.

IN THE CLAIMS:

Please amend claims 1, 2, and 9, as follows:

1. (Amended)   A method of measuring a displacement of an optical axis of an optical microscope having an illumination optical system and a projection optical system, the method comprising: